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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

NFAC #7772-80
28 November 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA : Bruce C. Clarke, Jr.
Deputy Director, National Foreign Assessment

FROM : Robert M. Gates
National Intelligence Officer for USSR-EE

SUBJECT : Prospect for Poland (C)

1. The situation in Poland is intolerable to the Soviet Union. The Polish party is divided and demoralized. Its authority is steadily weakening under the weight of continued concessions to Solidarity. The demands of Solidarity and others are now striking at the foundations of Communist power in Poland -- the security forces. The independence and benefits gained by Solidarity are being sought aggressively by other elements of society. The Party increasingly appears to be -- and is -- not in control. At the same time, the economic outlook is grim and worsening. Finally, the East German and Czech leaders are doubtless expressing to Moscow in increasingly strident terms their fear of the Polish disease spreading. Even were no further demands or concessions to be made, I believe the Soviets cannot and will not settle for the status quo. (C)

2. The Russians have three options:

-- To go along with Kania (or his successors) indefinitely in the hope that he can get the workers' genie back into the bottle by buying time through concessions and then very gradually whittling away the concessions that have been made. This seems unlikely, especially since events are moving so quickly. Recent experience has demonstrated to the Polish regime and the Soviets that concessions breed only more, and broader, demands. Each concession buys less time before the next demand. Finally, the prospect for fudging on or withdrawing concessions already made is very remote in the foreseeable future.

-- To undertake coercive measures against the union leadership and other leaders of the current unrest in Poland. Wide ranging

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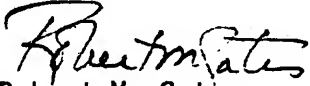
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arrests of activists -- perhaps in the thousands -- by the Polish regime with a massive, non-violent show of strength by Polish forces could recapture the initiative for the government, especially if accompanied by explicit Warsaw Pact (Soviet) statements that the alternative was "fraternal assistance" to preserve Communist power in Poland. This would be an effort to decapitate the workers movement and intimidate any potential successor leaders. There are obvious risks to this course, including above all clashes between workers and Polish security/military units. Nevertheless, this step could be portrayed as preventing an invasion and as necessary to preserve Polish independence. It might work.

-- To invade Poland at the request of a new, hardline Polish government. Neo-Stalinist, economic austerity measures would be taken to get the country on the track of economic recovery. The Soviets could count on Western reaction being transitory, especially in Europe. They already suspect the new U.S. administration will take much of 1981 to assess US-Soviet relations and that the consequences of Moscow's action to protect its own backyard would be no worse than the consequences of their action in Czechoslovakia was for US-USSR relations in the new Nixon administration. (C)

3. I believe we will see the following developments in the next few weeks. The tone of Soviet propaganda will harden and considerable pressure will be brought to bear on Kania to draw the line with Solidarity. Kania's failure to do so would result in his replacement. At some point, I speculate before Christmas, the Polish regime -- under great pressure from the USSR -- will take coercive measures to stop the constant hemorrhage of its political authority -- along the lines of Option 2. If this were to fail or provoke widespread resistance the Poles could not control, then the Soviets would employ their own military forces in support of the Polish party -- Option 3. The cost of re-establishing Polish party control will be great; the cost of failure to do so would be incalculable by Soviet reckoning. (C)


Robert M. Gates

cc: Chairman, NIC

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